

Posthumus taps Bennett as his running mate on GOP ticket

State senator is surprising lieutenant governor nominee

BY TEDD SCHNEIDER
STAFF WRITER

The stickers resembled a personalized license plate, blue with "Bennett Backer" stenciled in white. Loren Bennett was passing them out to all takers in the lobby of the Amway Grand Plaza hotel in Grand Rapids 18 months ago as he began his secretary of state campaign.

He can toss any leftovers. The state senator from Canton was tapped Tuesday by Republican gubernatorial nominee Dick Posthumus for the lieutenant governor's spot on the ballot. The announcement, a mild surprise, came as Posthumus traveled the rest of the ticket at a hastily-called press conference at Summit on the Park.

Rounding out the Republican slate (which needs ratification at this weekend's convention)



Bennett

will be attorney general nominee Mike Cox, an assistant Wayne County prosecutor from Livonia; and Kent County Clerk Terri Land as the secretary of state nominee. Jennifer Granholm, the Democratic gubernatorial nominee, hadn't announced her running mate as of Wednesday.

SUDDEN CHANGE

Bennett, in his remarks Tuesday, said he was "proud, honored and ready" for the lieutenant governor bid. Speaking with reporters a few minutes later he admitted the change in plans, which was broadcasted last week, caught him off-guard.

"It's a bit overwhelming to me that he (Posthumus) has done this," Bennett said.

"There was a grieving period because we worked so hard (for secretary of state). I felt we had

the (delegate) votes so it was difficult to give that up," he said. "But when you're asked (to be a running mate) it's not something you can turn down."

Posthumus outlined what he expected Bennett to bring to the ticket - and hammered home the Republicans' campaign strategy - in introducing his choices. "I wanted in the end a partner who could work with me to solve Michigan's problems, to hit the ground running and who knew what it was like to be a first-year legislator," he said.

"My first priority was to find the most experienced and capable person should something happen to me."

The current lieutenant governor said his running mate would have a policy role on environmental issues (a Bennett strength) and "would be my full-time liaison to cities, townships and local government. That's going to be very important to me."

Analysts called Bennett's selection a solid, but less than exciting choice.

"I wouldn't call it a superstar ticket, but I've seen worse," Bill Ballenger, editor of the newsletter Inside Michigan Politics, said Wednesday.

Ballenger said the ticket is geographically balanced for Republicans, but isn't likely to attract a large number of independent voters necessary to overcome Granholm's substantial lead in the polls.

Had one reason for Bennett's selection as running mate may have been to avoid a floor fight at the convention and clear the way for Land's spot.

Bennett, 51, is completing his second and last Senate term (under term limits.)

Before his election in 1994, he served six years as Canton Township Clerk.

He became interested in public service after attending a township board meeting in the late 1970s when he was a member of the Jaycees.

"It was at that meeting that I decided 'I can do this and I can do it better,'" he said in a 1999 Canton Observer story.

MENTORS CITED

Bennett is a Canton native. On Tuesday, he recalled "riding bikes up and down Denton Road" with Jan LaFramboise, who now works in the township clerk's office. He also paid tribute to Bonnie Berg and her late husband, Bart, who were politi-

cal mentors and worked on his first campaign.

Bennett's parents worked for Wayne County. His late father, Morris, was a firefighter at the Eloise complex in Westland and his mother, Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Bennett, worked at a county health clinic. She is retired and living in Florida.

His dad was a staunch Democrat, "who never voted for a Republican in his life," Bennett said previously.

He married Terry Bennett, an Ann Arbor native, in 1973. They have two daughters.

Wendy, 23, is an environmental scientist with Delta Environmental. She is a Michigan State University graduate and a Garden City resident.

Cindy is a freshman at State University of New York at Stony Brook. She hopes to be a marine biologist. She is attending school on a soccer scholarship and is in the Olympic Development Program.

Terry Bennett succeeded Loren as township clerk.

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Trio of Oakland Republicans declined lieutenant governor bid

BY DAN WEST
STAFF WRITER

Dick Posthumus selected state Sen. Loren Bennett as his running mate this week, but the decision came after the Republican gubernatorial candidate made failed pitches to at least three Oakland County Republicans.

Bennett, a term-limited state senator from Canton who worked with Posthumus when both were state senators in the 1990s, joins the Posthumus campaign as the lieutenant governor candidate.

Before Tuesday's announcement, Posthumus approached three prominent Oakland politicians as potential running mates, but State Rep. Nancy Cassis, Drain Commissioner John McCulloch and Sheriff Michael Bouchard declined.

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Michael Bouchard declined. All three said they were offered the chance to run with Posthumus, despite claims from Posthumus spokesman Sage Eastman that they weren't.

"We had discussions with all three (Bouchard, Cassis, McCulloch) as well as many others," Eastman said. "None of the three were asked to be lieutenant governor or fill any

other spot on the ticket."

Cassis, a term-limited state representative from Novi who just won a heated Senate primary over fellow state Rep. Mike Kowall, would have taken the ticket a female candidate from Southeast Michigan.

Some analysts said this would have been a plus for the Posthumus campaign.

Cassis said she was honored to be asked, but wants to

remain focused on her Senate campaign.

"I feel I serve the state and my district better as a state senator," Cassis said.

McCulloch is a veteran of Oakland County politics. He served as a county commissioner for 10 years, ending his tenure as board chairman when he was elected drain commissioner in 2000.

McCulloch, who would've helped Posthumus push water quality initiatives, said he discussed the opportunity to run as lieutenant governor with his family, but found it was a bad time to leave his duties as drain commissioner.

"I've been in this position just shy of two years and I've started some major initiatives I'd like to see carried out," McCulloch said. "I need to focus on the job

people elected me to do."

Bouchard shared Republican leadership roles with Posthumus for several years before Posthumus became lieutenant governor and Bouchard became Oakland's sheriff in 1999.

Bouchard would have provided the GOP ticket his experience as a lawmaker, law enforcer and businessman to the GOP ticket.

"Yes, I was asked, but I felt it was best to stay where I'm at right now," Bouchard said. "It's really tough to turn down the offer from someone I consider a good man and a very good friend."

Analysts suggested Posthumus, who hails from a small farming community in western Michigan, needed a metro Detroit area as a running

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BIRMINGHAM WELCOMES TONY BENNETT

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Birmingham, MI - The Avenue Gallery is proud to announce a special exhibition of limited edition, museum-quality lithographs from one of America's most revered vocal artists. A truly gifted individual who leads a double-life. Painting under the family name of Anthony Benedetto, this artist is none other than the incomparable Tony Bennett.

Whether performing on stage or in the studio as Anthony Benedetto, the 75-year young artist offers the recipient of his artistry a bridge to his personal values and views of the world. The painter is an alter ego to the performer, living out a passion that is personal and introspective.

The art of Anthony Benedetto, is sought after by many well known collectors, and has been featured in numerous art publications. The United Nations has commissioned this artist on two occasions, including their 50th Anniversary. Most recently, Bennett was selected to create two original watercolors as part of the "Art of the Kentucky Derby", a series commemorating the 127th running of the Kentucky Derby. The Avenue Gallery invites you to stop in for your own personal tour of Tony Bennett's world, as the artist Anthony Benedetto.

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